DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 713 CG 022 296

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TITLE Different Views of Love: Deductive and Inductive Inquiry and the Implications of Research Findings for Counseling.
PUB DATE Mar 90
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Counseling and Development (Cincinnati, OH, March 16-19, 1990).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Book Reviews; *Counseling; *Interpersonal Attraction; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Love; Scientific Methodology; *Sexuality

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Different Views of Love: Deductive and Inductive Inquiry and the Implications of Research Findings for Counseling

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Counseling and Development, Cincinnati, March 16-19, 1990. Requests for reprints should be addressed to: Bruce Thompson, Research Professor of Education, University of New Orleans, N.O., LA 70148.

ABSTRACT

The fact that love is so fundamental to the human experience and can affect clients in so many ways suggests that counselors may frequently encounter clients seeking assistance with problems involving love, and that counselors may consequently be interested in scientific inquiry regarding the nature and the experience of love. The purpose of the present paper is to briefly review two distinct scenarios of inquiry (deductive and inductive) regarding the nature of love. Findings in the two scenarios are summarized, and references include citations for the related studies. Selected seminal readings of potential interest to counselors are also identified and briefly annotated.

Behavioral scientists have traditionally eschewed scholarly inquiry regarding love phenomena. Thus, Sisca, Walsh and Walsh (1985, p. 64) note that "The concept of love deprivation has been predictably ignored (as being perhaps 'unscientific,' 'mystical,' and unmeasurable)." As Wrightsman and Deaux (1981, p. 170) observe, researchers have historically "believed that love is too mysterious and too intangible for scientific study." Elkins and Smith (1979, p. 7) suggest a possible etiology underlying the avoidance of studies of love:

> This desire for scientific respectability has resulted in those professionals looking askance at love, which most often has been perceived as an intangible feeling or idea that cannot be objectively observed or measured.

Initial investigations of love phenomena conducted during the 1940s were "followed by nearly a 20-year period in which there is almost no published evidence of efforts to investigate love phenomena using inventories or paper-and-pencil testing" (Elkins & Smith, 1979, p. 10). For example, Curtin (1973) found that love was not mentioned in the 23 volumes of the Annual Review of Psychology that he surveyed. However, as C. Hendrick and S. Hendrick (1986, p. 392) note, "During the past decade, love has become respectable as an area for study by psychologists." Work by Rubin (1984), by Sternberg and Grajek (1984), and by Tennov (1979) illustrates efforts to develop science in the area of love phenomena.

The importance of investigating love phenomena can be argued on several grounds. For example, in their review of the literature, Sisca, Walsh and Walsh (1985, p. 63) note that

> Love deprivation has frequently been linked epidemiologically to a variety of pathological syndromes since Durkheim (1947) demonstrated that suicide varied inversely with the strength of ties one enjoys with other people. Other researchers have linked schizophrenia (Buss, 1966), psychopathy (McCord & McCord, 1974), neurosis (Rosen & Gregory, 1965), hysteria (Bowlby, 1977) and crime (Glasser, 1976), to be the pernicious effects of love deprivation.

For most people, love is fundamental to the human experience. If social science focuses on the human experience, social science can ill afford to deem inappropriate for study such important phenomena.

These various considerations suggest that counselors may frequently encounter clients seeking assistance with problems involving love, and that counselors may consequently be interested in scientific inquiry regarding the nature and the experience of love. The purpose of the present paper is to briefly review two distinct scenarios of inquiry regarding the nature of love. Selected seminal readings of potential interest to counselors are also identified and briefly annotated.

Inquiry and Insight Regarding Love Phenomena

Several scholars have attempted to develop definitions and theories of love (cf. Rubin, 1970, 1974; Hinkel & Sporakowski, 1975; Montagu, 1975; Walster & Walster, 1978). But more recent works illustrate the trend toward the use of more complex or multidimensional views of love. Such views presume that love can be many different things to different people, or many different things to a given person at different points in time or in relation to different significant others. As C. Hendrick and S. Hendrick (1986, p. 392) suggest, "Early theories that used global concepts of love are being replaced by theories that use multidimensional constructs that promise greater yields in knowledge."

Deductive Inquiry

One major potential tact in scientific inquiry is primarily **deductive**. Such inquiry is theory-grounded and is initiated with rather specific hypotheses or expectations. Work within the framework of the classical quantitative research paradigm typically is "hypothetico-deductive", and falls within this tradition, as explained by Thompson (1989, pp. 20-22). Studies of love within this framework are well represented by the series of studies reported by the Hendricks (e.g., C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick, in press; S. Hendrick & C. Hendrick, 1987; Thompson & Borrello, 1988).

The work of the Hendricks has been grounded in the theory of love advanced by Lee (1973/1976), who presents a typology of three primary love styles: (a) eros, which is romantic or passionate love, (b) ludus, which is game playing love, and (c) storge, which is friendship love. Three secondary styles are formed as compounds

of the primary styles, but still have their own unique properties and characters: (a) mania, which is a compound of ludus and eros, (b) pragma, which is a compound of storge and ludus, and (c) agape, which is a compound of eros and storge.

Lee's (1973/1976) hierarchical typology seems to have potent ability to subsume findings in previous studies, as noted by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986, p. 393):

> Exchange theory is probably a basis for Lee's (1973/1976) Pragma (logical), whereas Clark and Mills' (1979) communal love is exemplified by Agape (selfless). Barscheid and Walster (1978) would recognize Eros as their passionate love, whereas compassionate love is probably best represented by Storge (friendship). Kelley's (1983) pragmatic love would seem to equal Pragma. Even Dion and Dion's (1973) factors appear very similar to Lee's (1973) constructs: Volatile = Mania, Circumspect = Storge; Rational = Pragma; and Passionate = Eros.

The Hendricks (1986, in press) and their colleagues (C. Hendrick, S. Hendrick, Foote & Slapion-Foote, 1984) have conducted an impressive series of studies regarding the dimensions or structure underlying their measure of Lee's typology. The background and the findings of these studies are summarized by S. Henrick and C. Hendrick (1987).

Essentially, the Hendricks have concluded, across a series of studies with different subjects and across some variations in their

instrument's item wording, that the six types of love theorized to exist by Lee (1973/1976) do exist and can in fact be measured. However, there is also some evidence that the six factors or "colors" of love may not be discrete and may in fact collapse into a more general or "g" factor or dominant omnipresent form of love (cf. Borrello & Thompson, 1989a; Sternberg & Grajek, 1984; Thompson & Borrello, 1987b, 1990). In any case, the works of Lee (1973/1976) and of the Hendricks remain seminal reading for counselors interested in scientific inquiry regarding the nature of love.

Inductive Inquiry

A second major tact that can be taken in scientific inquiry is primarily **inductive**. Work of this sort begins with more general or diffuse expectations or hypotheses. As it originates such work is somewhat atheoretical, however, the actual purpose of such inquiry usually is to develop new theory, albeit not theory grounded in the expectations of theorists or the researchers themselves. Rather, such work endeavors to discover theory grounded in the perceptions or experiences of persons other than theorists or the researchers themselves, i.e., such work attempts to develop theory grounded in the perceptions of the subjects themselves. The work we have previously reported (e.g., Borrello & Thompson, 1989b; Thompson & Borrello, 1987a, 1987b) and ongoing work all represents inquiry in this second genre.

Our initial efforts (Thompson & Borrello, 1987b) were based on a major qualitative study undertaken by Tennov (1979). She interviewed large numbers of persons who had had diverse

experiences, and reports numerous insights that counselors may find intriguing. For example, it appears that about 10% of the people in the American adult populace perceive that they have never been in love. Another noteworthy portion of the persons who perceive they have been in love have decided that love can be painful or inconvenient and have decided that they shall never love again.

Tennov (1979) reports at length quotations from quite a few of her case study subjects. These quotations were utilized by us in developing a pool of items making various assertions about the experience of love. Across various subject pools and analytic methods (e.g., Borrello & Thompson, 1989a) our typical finding with our measure has been that a single general or "g" factor or love dominates peoples' perceptions of love phenomena. In short, our work suggests that people primarily think about love in terms of one dimension, although they do consider some noteworthy (but more minor) variations in other areas as also being aspects of love. This view is consistent with results reported by Sternberg and Grajek (1984), for example.

The main element of the predominant dimension of love we have identified involves <u>obsessive thought</u> about the loved one, i.e., an inability or an unwillingness to put aside for very long thoughts of the one whom is loved. We have also reported some evidence for this "g" factor view of love using items from the Hendricks' measure, although this evidence has only been suggestive (e.g., Thompson & Borrello, 1987b).

The various nuance or minor theme variations about the

dominant "g" factor view of love that we have isolated include dimensions such as (a) the affects or feelings of love; (b) love originating in will rather than spontaneously or unexpectedly; (c) the excitement and simultaneously the agony that one will be rejected by the lover; (d) sexual aspects of feelings of love; and (e) irrational aspects of love.

Summary and Some Suggested Readings

Sternberg and Grajek (1984, p. 312) note that

> Love can be among the most intense of human emotions, and is certainly one of the most sought after. People have been known to lie, cheat, steal, and even kill in its name, yet no one knows quite what it is.

Yet it may be helpful for counselors to have some familiarity with scientific findings regarding the nature of love. Though these findings are more impressionistic than conclusive, the findings do suggest some insights that counselors may find useful.

For example, the theoretical views of Lee (1973/1976) and the related work of the Hendricks suggests that love may be different things to different people, or to persons at different points in time or in relation to different lovers. Similarly, the work of Tennov (1979) suggests some interesting insights, e.g., insights regarding persons who feel they have never loved or persons who have loved but have elected to never love again. Appendix A presents an annotated bibliography of selected readings about love that counselors may find especially useful, and which summarize

some of these viewpoints and previous scientific studies.

Previous scholarly work regarding love has not yet yielded firm conclusions regarding the important phenomenon of love. But the work that has been conducted is interesting, and suggests that promise of further inquiry. It is certainly noteworthy that scholars now appear to consider this important experience worthy of scientific study. These developments suggest that future inquiry may generate new insights of potential interest to counselors and other mental health professionals.

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Hinkel, D. E., & Sporakowski, M. J. (1975). Attitudes toward love: A re-examination. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 37, 764-767.

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APPENDIX A:

Brief Annotated Bibliography of Selected Readings about Love

Hendrick, S.S., & Hendrick, C. (1987). Love and sex attitudes: A close relationship. In W.H. Jones & D. Perlman (Eds.), Advances in personal relationships (Vol. 1) (pp. 141-169). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

This book chapter is a thorough exposition of the work of the Hendricks up to the time of publication, and also includes discussion of the work of others approaching theory or empirical investigation using varying perspectives and methods. The chapter is excellent both for its content and its comprehensiveness and for its references.

Lee, J. A. (1973). The colors of love: An exploration of the ways of loving. Don Mills, Ontario: New Press. (Popular Edition, 1976)

Lee opens his book by exposing a premise that "different people can mean different things by that simple phrase 'I love you'" (p. 1). Lee bases his conclusion that six "lovestyles" exist upon analysis of the experiences of more than 200 men and women from the ages of 16 to 70. The book makes liberal use of quotations from popular literature to illustrate the six "colors" of love. These quotations and the descriptions within the book do a nice job of communicating the metaphors of love that Lee posits to exist.

Tennov, D. (1979). Love and limerance: The experience of being in love. New York: Stein and Day.

Tennov's book is based on data about love experiences from a diverse sample of people. The book is noteworthy for the use of

long quotations from the case studies. Thus, the book is especially useful for gaining fairly in-depth insight into the diverse ways in which people think about and experience love. Tennov also offers suggestions that some counselors will find useful. For example, in her view a person in love will not accept rejection if there is any indication that the love remains a possibility, suggesting that clients who wish to terminate a relationship must be clear and absolute in communicating their decisions to significant others.